

NICE COVID19 RESPONSE

TALK2NICE

A FRIENDLY PHONE CALL ... BECAUSE WE CARE

Connecting Older Adults with Social Workers During COVID-19: NICE's New Program, TALK2NICE

Although it is clear that well-intentioned public health responses during the COVID-19 pandemic are meant to safeguard vulnerable older adults in the community, retirement residences and in long-term care, these measures have also had the unintended consequences of social and emotional isolation. Older adults have been disconnected from family members, social supports, and care staff. Most of the existing support (e.g., grocery and medication delivery) and phone support lines are 'one-off' interactions and calls that users make, and there is no continuous engagement with trained support staff. Furthermore, what calls to the phone lines strongly suggest is that there exists an actual or perceived weakness in the older adult's social support system.

To address these issues, and to support the mental well-being of older adults in the community and in residential care during the pandemic, the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE) has implemented *TALK2NICE*, a free, over the phone outreach support service to connect older adults with social workers and social work students for friendly check-ins. The aim of this outreach program is to provide much-needed support to older adults during and after the enforced isolation that is part of the current response to COVID-19, the recovery, and as we transition to a new normal in community and residential care settings, such as long-term care.

For more information about the TALK2NICE Program, please visit: www.nicenet.ca

For more information about NICE's TALK2NICE Program or for media inquiries, please contact:

Jason Ferreirinha, Program Manager, TALK2NICE, National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE), Jason.Ferreirinha@mail.utoronto.ca, 416-970-6857

For more information about NICE or for media inquiries, please contact:

Raza M. Mirza, Network Manager, National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE), Raza.Mirza@utoronto.ca, 416-508-0215